

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Original) A spare tire carrier for a vehicle having a rear gate mounted for pivotal movement between open and closed positions, said spare tire carrier comprising:

a first leg member having a first end pivotally mountable to the vehicle, said first leg member having mounting structure on which a spare tire is mountable, and

a second leg member having a first end pivotally connected to a second end of the first leg member and a second end pivotally mountable to the rear gate for maintaining a substantially parallel relationship between the first leg member and the rear gate during pivotal movement thereof, at least one of the first and second leg members being adjustable in length for shortening the length thereof thereby offsetting sagging of said rear gate upon mounting the spare tire on the mounting structure.

2. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 1 wherein said rear gate, said first leg member, and said second leg member are respectively mounted for pivotal movement about substantially vertical axes.

3. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 1 wherein said rear gate (6) and said first leg member (7) are respectively mountable to said vehicle for pivotal movement about substantially vertical first (10) and second (11) axes and said second leg member (9) is respectively mountable to said rear gate (6) and to said first leg member (7) for pivotal movement about substantially vertical third (13) and fourth (17) axes.

4. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 3 wherein the length of said at least one of said first and second leg members (7,9) is adjustable between at least one of the respective pair of the second (11) and fourth (17) axes and of the third (11) and fourth (17) axes.

5. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 4 wherein said adjustable one of said leg members is said second leg member (9) between said third (13) and fourth (17) axes.

6. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 3 wherein the distance between the second and third axes (11,13) is less than the combined distance between the second and fourth axes (11,17) plus the distance between the third and fourth axes (13,17).

7. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 6 wherein the adjustable length of said one leg member adjusts said combined distance.

8. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 3 further including third and fourth leg members (7',9'), said third leg member (7') being mountable to said vehicle for pivotal movement about said second axis (11), said fourth leg member being mountable to said gate for pivotal movement about said third axis (13), said third and fourth leg members further being mountable for pivotal movement relative to each other about said fourth axis (17) with said first and third leg members (7,7') substantially parallel to each other and with said second and fourth leg members (9,9') substantially parallel to each other.

9. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 1 wherein said spare tire is mountable to said spare tire carrier by at least first and second members (49,51) mounted for slidable movement relative to each other along a fifth axis (50).

10. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 9 wherein said first and second members (49,51) are concentrically mounted relative to each other.

11. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 9 wherein said fifth axis is substantially horizontal.

12. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 9 wherein said spare tire is secured to at least one of said first and second members (49,51).

13. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 1 further including a stop member (29) mounted on said rear gate, said stop member being spaced from said spare tire carrier when said rear gate is in said open position and said stop member abutting at least one of said leg members (7,9) when said rear gate is in said closed position.

14. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 13 wherein said stop member abuts said first leg member (7) when said rear gate is in said closed position

15. (Canceled).

16. (Currently Amended) ~~The improvement of claim 15~~ In a vehicle having a rear gate mounted to the body of the vehicle for pivotal movement about a first substantially vertical axis (10) between an open position permitting access to the interior of the vehicle through an opening defined at least in part by portions of the vehicle body and a closed position preventing access through said opening, said gate having a free end spaced from said first axis (10), the improvement including an arrangement to selectively raise the free end of said gate relative to the opening in said vehicle to properly align said gate including the free end thereof with the opening in said vehicle wherein the arrangement includes first and second leg members (7,9), said first leg member (7) being mountable mounted to said body for pivotal movement about a second substantially vertical axis (11), said second leg member (9) being mountable mounted to said gate (6) for pivotal movement about a third substantially vertical axis (13), said first and second leg members (7,9) being further mountable mounted to each other about a fourth substantially vertical axis (17) wherein the length of at least one

of said leg members (7,9) is adjustable between at least one of the respective pair of the second and fourth axes (11,17) and of the third and fourth axes (13,17) to selectively raise the free end of said gate relative to the opening in said vehicle to properly align said gate including the free end thereof with the opening in said vehicle.

17. (Original) The improvement of claim 16 wherein said adjustable one of said leg members is said second leg member (9) between said third and fourth axes (13,17).

18. (Original) The improvement of claim 16 wherein the distance between the second and third axes (11,13) is less than the combined distance between the second and fourth axes (11,17) plus the distance between the third and fourth axes (13,17).

19. (Original) The improvement of claim 18 wherein the adjustable length of said one leg member adjusts said combined distance.

20. (Currently Amended) The improvement of claim 16 further including third and fourth leg members (7',9'), said third leg member (7') being ~~mountable~~ mounted to said body for pivotal movement about said second axis (11), said fourth leg member being ~~mountable~~ mounted to said gate for pivotal movement about said third axis (13), said third and fourth leg members further being ~~mountable~~ mounted for pivotal movement relative to each other about said fourth axis (17) with said first and third leg members (7,7') substantially parallel to each other and with said second and fourth leg members (9,9') substantially parallel to each other.

21. (Original) A spare tire carrier for a vehicle, said vehicle having a rear gate and body with portions defining an opening for said gate, said gate being mounted to said body for pivotal movement about a first substantially vertical axis (10) between an open

position permitting access to the interior of the vehicle through said opening and a closed position preventing access through said opening, said spare tire carrier including:

first and second leg members (7,9), said first leg member (7) being mountable to said body for pivotal movement about a second substantially vertical axis (11), said second leg member (9) being mounted to said gate (6) for pivotal movement about a third substantially vertical axis (13), said first and second leg members (7,9) being further mounted to each other about a fourth substantially vertical axis (17), said spare tire being mountable to said spare tire carrier wherein the length of at least one of said leg members (7,9) is adjustable between at least one of the respective pair of the second and fourth axes (11,17) and of the third and fourth axes (13,17) to adjust the vertical alignment of said spare tire and said spare tire carrier.

22. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 21 wherein said adjustable one of said leg members is said second leg member (9) between said third and fourth axes (13,17).

23. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 21 wherein the distance between the second and third axes (11,13) is less than the combined distance between the second and fourth axes (11,17) plus the distance between the third and fourth axes (13,17).

24. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 23 wherein the adjustable length of said one leg member adjusts said combined distance.

25. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 21 further including third and fourth leg members (7',9'), said third leg member (7') being mountable to said body for pivotal movement about said second axis (11), said fourth leg member being mountable for pivotal movement about said third axis (13), said third and fourth leg members further being mountable for pivotal movement relative to each

other about said fourth axis (17) with said first and third leg members (7,7') substantially parallel to each other and with said second and fourth leg members (9,9') substantially parallel to each other.

26. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 25 wherein the alignment of said fourth substantially vertical axis (17) to a true vertical axis is adjustable.

27. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 26 wherein the alignment of said fourth axis (17) is adjustable by adjusting the length of said one of said leg members.

28. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 21 wherein said spare tire is mountable to said spare tire carrier by at least first and second members (49,51) mounted for slidable movement relative to each other along a fifth axis (50).

29. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 28 wherein said first and second members (49,51) are concentrically mounted relative to each other.

30. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 28 wherein said fifth axis is substantially horizontal.

31. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 28 wherein said spare tire is secured to at least one of said first and second members (49,51).

32. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 21 further including a stop member (29) mounted on said gate, said stop member being spaced from said spare tire carrier when said gate is in said open position and said stop member abutting at least one of said leg members (7,9) when said gate is in said closed position.

33. (Original) The spare tire carrier of claim 32 wherein said stop member abuts said first leg member (7) when said gate is in said closed position

34. (Currently Amended) In a vehicle having a rear gate mounted by at least one pivot member to the body of the vehicle for pivotal movement about a first substantially vertical axis (10) and an object ~~such as a spare tire being~~ supported in part on said gate including said pivot member therefor and in part on the body of the vehicle at a location spaced from said pivot member for said gate, a first portion of the weight of the object being supported by said gate including said pivot member therefor and a second portion of the weight of the object being supported by said body at said spaced location, the improvement including an arrangement to selectively adjust the relative amounts of the first and second portions of the weight of the object respectively being supported by the gate including the pivot member therefor and by the body of the vehicle at said spaced location.

35. (Original) The improvement of claim 34 wherein the arrangement includes first and second leg members (7,9), said first leg member (7) being mountable to said body for pivotal movement about a second substantially vertical axis (11), said second leg member (9) being mountable to said gate (6) for pivotal movement about a third substantially vertical axis (13), said first and second leg members (7,9) being further mountable to each other about a fourth substantially vertical axis (17) wherein the length of at least one of said leg members (7,9) is adjustable between at least one of the respective pair of the second and fourth axes (11,17) and of the third and fourth axes (13,17) to selectively adjust the relative amounts of the first and second portions of the weight of the object respectively being supported by the gate including the pivot member therefor and by the body of the vehicle at said spaced location.

36. (Original) The improvement of claim 35 wherein said adjustable one of said leg members is said second leg member (9) between said third and fourth axes (13,17).

37. (Original) The improvement of claim 35 wherein the distance between the second and third axes (11,13) is less than the combined distance between the second and fourth axes (11,17) plus the distance between the third and fourth axes (13,17).

38. (Original) The improvement of claim 37 wherein the adjustable length of said one leg member adjusts said combined distance.

39. (Currently Amended) The improvement of claim 35 further including third and fourth leg members (7',9'), said third leg member (7') being ~~mountable~~ mounted to said body for pivotal movement about said second axis (11), said fourth leg member being ~~mountable~~ mounted for pivotal movement about said third axis (13), said third and fourth leg members further being ~~mountable~~ mounted for pivotal movement relative to each other about said fourth axis (17) with said first and third leg members (7,7') substantially parallel to each other and with said second and fourth leg members (9,9') substantially parallel to each other.